

3, 5 and 7 Day Vacation Plan

There's so much to see and do in St. Johns County, it's impossible to pack it all into one vacation or even two.

It could, literally, take years to explore all the region offers, so we've pulled together a vacation planner to help you make the most of your time.

Here are our picks for must see-items on your vacation to do list, broken down into a 3-day, 5-day and 7-day planner.



St. Johns County Ocean Pier

3-Day Sightseeing Plan

Day 1: The Heart of St. Augustine

Castillo de San Marcos

The only existing 17th-century military construction in the country and the oldest masonry fortress in the U.S. is a must see. Re-enactors in 17th-century Spanish military uniform are on hand to answer questions and demonstrate life at the fort during St. Augustine's First Spanish Period (1565-1763). Open from 8:45 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. daily except Thanksgiving and Christmas. Adults \$10; children 15 and under free. Children must be accompanied by an adult. **Info:** nps.gov/casa.

Bull & Crown Publick House

A great place to sit outside and watch passersby on St. George Street, the Bull & Crown has a colonial tavern vibe. The pub-style menu features salads, soups, burgers, sandwiches and that British classic fish & chips. Hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday—Tuesday, and 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. **Info:** colonialquarter.com/dine/bull-and-crown-publick-house.



Colonial Quarter

Colonial Quarter

Glimpse 16th, 17th and 18th century colonial life in this living history museum located on St. George Street. Guests can see a 16th-century ship building project, participate in musket drills and dig for buried artifacts, plus see a 1770s printing press in the East Florida Gazette Print Shoppe. Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Tours are at 10:30 a.m., noon, 1:30 and 3 p.m. Adult tickets are \$11.99. Children ages 5-12 are \$6.99. **Info:** colonialquarter.com.

Oldest Wooden School House

A robotic (for real) teacher and students show what classrooms were like when one-room schoolhouses were the norm. No one knows exactly how old it is, but the schoolhouse was listed on tax records as far back as 1716. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Adult tickets are \$5; children 6 to 12 are \$4 and children under 6 are free.

Prohibition Kitchen

A vintage 1920s prohibition-era gastropub, the restaurant on St. George Street invites guests to escape into the clandestine, mysterious and illegal world of upper dresses, speakeasies, moonshine and swing. Menu items range from local boiled peanuts appetizers to cedar plank salmon dinner. **Info:** pkstaug.com.



St. George Street



Day 2: About Town

St. George Street

One of the most iconic streets in the country, pedestrian-only St. George Street is filled with one-of-a-kind shops, eateries and oddities. You could easily spend a week on St. George Street and not see it all.ough restaurants and shops abound, several museums and points of interest can be found along the way including the Oldest Wooden Schoolhouse, St. Photios Greek Orthodox Shrine and Pena Peck House.

Columbia Restaurant

A classic choice for lunch or dinner, Columbia Restaurant was voted one of 10 great places to make a meal out of a salad by USA Today. The restaurant's 1905 Salad includes iceberg lettuce, tomato, baked ham, Swiss cheese, pimento stuffed green Spanish olives and "1905" dressing. The extensive South American-inspired menu covers whatever you're hungry for including seafood, chicken, beef and vegetarian options.

Fountain of Youth

More than a spring promising eternal youth, the Ponce de Leon Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park encompasses 15 waterfront acres and features more than a dozen exhibits. Exhibits include a Timucuan burial ground and village, a navigator's planetarium and the spring house where the original spring recorded in a 17th-century Spanish land grant is located. Adult tickets are \$15. Children 6 to 12 are \$9. Children 5 and under are free. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. **Info:** fountainofyouthflorida.com. ▶

Fountain of Youth



Ripley's Believe it or Not Museum

ere's a reason Ripley's is called an odditorium. The museum, built in 1887 as a winter home for wealthy businessman William G. Warden, boasts more than 800 truly bizarre exhibits and artifacts. Hours are 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Tickets start at \$13.99. **Info:** ripleys.com/staugustine.

Michael's Tasting Room

e casual, elegant restaurant, led by Chef Michael Lugo, focuses on Spanish and Puerto Rican inspired cuisine with a twist. The menu changes seasonally and features fresh, local ingredients. Hours are 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesday–Sunday; closed Monday. Reservations are recommended. **Info:** michaelstastingroom.com.

Day 3: On the Island

St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum

e view is so incredible from the top it's worth the 219-step climb. In addition to nature trails and a shipyard play area for the kids, the property includes the 1876 Keeper's House museum and the recently opened Maritime Archaeology & Education Center. Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Adult tickets are \$12.95. Children 12 and under are \$10.95.



St. Augustine Lighthouse & Museum

Salt Life

A local chain, seafood figures heavily here, as one would imagine. Street tacos, Tuna and Mahi Poke Bowls and sushi are among locals' favorites. Sit outside on the top deck for a view of the St. Augustine Beach Pier and beach life at its best. **Info:** saltlifefoodshack.com.

Alligator Farm and Zoological Park

One of Florida's oldest traditions, the Alligator Farm has been around since the late 1800s. If you're up for an adventure, try zip lining over reptiles at 60 feet. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Tickets are \$24.99 for adults and \$13.99 for children ages 3 to 11. **Info:** alligatorfarm.com.

Black Raven Pirate Ship Dinner Cruise

What better way to end your three-day vacation than aboard a pirate ship? The Blackbeard's 1 ½ hour Treasure Hunt cruise includes swashbuckling entertainment, cocktails and snacks. Cruise departs at 6:15 p.m. nightly from the St. Augustine Municipal Marina. **Info:** blackravenadventures.com.

5-Day Sightseeing Plan

Day 4: St. Augustine History

Flagler's Legacy Historic Tour

Built by railroad magnate, Henry M. Flagler in 1888, the former Ponce de Leon Hotel (now Flagler College) is considered one of the best examples of Spanish Renaissance architecture. Flagler's Legacy tour of the college highlights the architectural heritage of the former hotel, which was one of the most exclusive resorts of its day. Tours are available at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. daily. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$1 for children age 4 to 12. **Info:** flagler.edu.



Flagler College

Lightner Museum

Housed in the former Alcazar Hotel (built by Henry Flagler in 1888), the museum is home to one of the best collections of fine and decorative 19th-century art in the country. The collection of Otto Lightner, a self-made, wealthy newspaper editor and publisher in the early 1900s, is an eclectic collection containing everything from typewriters to Tiffany glass. Some of the museum's unique items include a mummy, shrunken heads, human hair art, cigar labels, buttons, and salt and pepper shakers. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$11 for kids age 12 to 17. Children 11 and younger are free. **Info:** lightnermuseum.org.

Café Alcazar

An elegant eatery in the Lightner Museum, the Café Alcazar is situated in the space originally designated for the largest indoor swimming pool of its day, circa 1888. Open for lunch from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily, the café serves soups, salads and sandwiches made from fresh local and organic ingredients. **Info:** thealcazarcafe.com.



Oldest House Complex

Built circa 1691, structural elements in the oldest house complex cover three eras of St. Augustine history — the first Spanish period (1565-1763), the British period (1763-1784) and American occupations (1821-1845).

Aviles Street

Even if there were nothing on it, you couldn't pass up the chance to walk down the oldest street in the continental U.S. Luckily, the brick-covered street is lined with art galleries, eateries and museums.

A1A Ale Works

Grab a table on the upstairs balcony for one of the most romantic views in downtown St. Augustine. The restaurant, overlooking the bayfront, features a full menu of appetizers, soups and salads, sandwiches and entrees ranging from seafood to steak to pasta. Hours are 11 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Friday and Saturday. **Info:** a1aaleworks.com.

Day 5: Casual Coastal

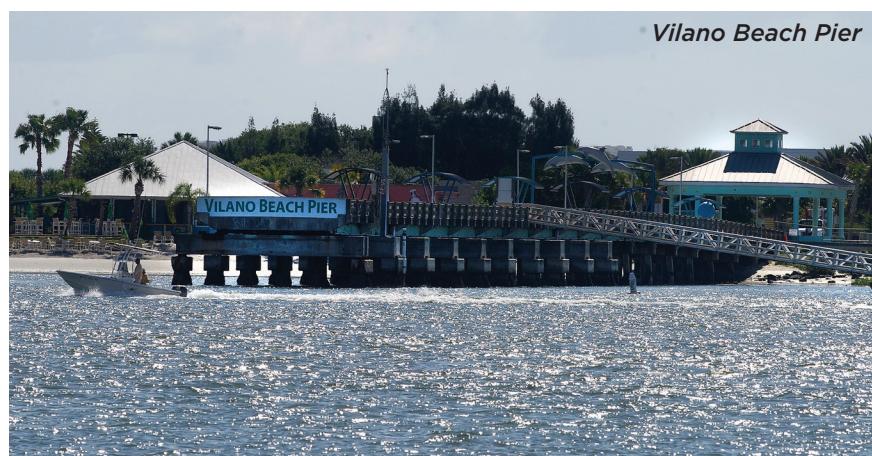
GTM Research Reserve Environmental Education Center

If you're new to salt life, this is the place to start. Visitors can learn about the many functions of the coastal and estuarine ecosystem and the natural history of Northeast Florida. Hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday–Saturday. Closed Sunday and Monday. Free admission. **Info:** gtmnerr.org.



Vilano Beach Town Center

A walkable half mile between the Intracoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean, the business center of Vilano Beach has a cool 1950s vibe.



Beaches at Vilano

A Caribbean style eatery at the foot of the Vilano Bridge, Beaches at Vilano serves up Caribbean flavors with an outdoor bar and plenty of patio seating. A full menu includes appetizers, salads, sandwiches and entrees. **Info:** beachesatvilano.com.

Vilano Beach

Time for fun in the sun! Vilano Beach is a quiet beach with plenty of shells for the beachcombers. The main beach access has parking, lighting, restrooms and showers, so you can rinse off before heading to dinner.



Caps on the Water

Caps on the Water

An Old-Florida style dining experience with enviable sunset views, Caps is both elegant and Old Florida chic at the same time. Seafood is prominent on the menu, but steak and chicken are also available. **Info:** capsonthewater.com.

7-Day Sightseeing Plan

Day 6: On the Outskirts

Alpine Groves Park

A passive park with 54 acres on the St Johns River, Alpine Groves was an orange grove at one time. The circa 1900s farmhouse and shed that still contains much of the grove's machinery for processing fruit provide a glimpse of early life on the St. Johns River.

State Road 13

Whether you approach it from the north end at Julington Creek or from the south end at State Road 207, a drive down State Road 13 stirs the imagination. Moss-draped tree-lined streets and a dock-lined St. Johns River are reminiscent of life at a slower, more soulful pace.

Jim's Place

A family restaurant on State Road 207 in Elkton, Jim's Place serves up country-style eats in what was formerly a general store. Boasting the best burgers around, the restaurant also features daily specials like Wednesday Steak Day and Big Fish Friday. Hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday–Saturday. **Info:** jimsplacefamilyrestaurant.com. ►

Fort Matanzas

ough the lesser known fort in the region, Matanzas has a special place in local history. Visitors can explore the fort built to protect the rear entrance to St. Augustine and follow the hiking trail to the spot where founding father Pedro Menéndez de Avilés slaughtered more than 200 French Huguenots in 1565, giving the fort and the river its name. Matanzas is the Spanish word for slaughters.

Fort Matanzas



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Marineland

On on-site research facility, Marineland fosters the preservation and protection of marine life. The facility uses interactive education to inspire visitors to value and respect marine mammals and their environment. Visitors can watch the dolphins swim and play through acrylic windows or get up close and personal with a touch & feed admission for \$34.95. **Info:** marineland.net.

Viola's

Voted Best Italian Food in the Best of St. Augustine 2017, Viola's serves up authentic pizzas, pastas and classic Italian dishes in addition to seafood favorites. Pets are welcome on the dog-friendly deck and patio. Hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday—Tuesday and 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. **Info:** violaspasta.com.



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Day 7: A Day at the Beach

Anastasia State Park

With 1,600 acres of beachfront property, Anastasia State Park has an abundance of wildlife. Open 8 a.m. to sunset daily, the park offers shelling, camping and swimming in addition to onsite rentals for kayaks, bicycles, paddleboards and sail boats. Admission fees are \$8 per vehicle of 2 to 8; \$4 for single-occupant vehicle, and \$2 for pedestrians or bicyclists. **Info:** floridastateparks.org/park/Anastasia.

Nalu's Tropical Take Out

A food truck with staying power, Nalu's has been in St. Augustine since 2002. Located in the Surf Station parking lot, the eatery specializes in seafood with a



Anastasia State Park

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tropical Hawaiian are. Ahi tuna poke bowls and sh tacos are local favorites. Open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday and Mondays. Picnic style seating on-site or grab it to go and have a picnic in the park. **Info:** nalusstaugustine.com.

St. Augustine Pier

A hub for activity at St. Augustine Beach, the St. Johns County Ocean Pier is a popular shing spot for locals, but sightseers enjoy the view too. Located on a 4-acre beachfront park, the property includes a visitor's information center and gift shop in addition to beach volleyball courts, a pavilion, and a playground and Splash Park. Admission to the pier is \$3 for anglers and \$1 for sightseers.

Sunset Grille

A St. Augustine Beach staple for 25 years, Sunset Grille offers a full menu of appetizers, soups and salads, sandwiches and burgers, and dinner entrees. A local favorite is the restaurant's award-winning chowders, which include Northeast Clam Chowder, Minorcan Conch Chowder and New Minorcan — one-half New England and one-half Minorcan. **Info:** sunsetgrillea1a.com.

Fiesta Falls Miniature Golf

Just south of the St. Augustine Beach Pier, Fiesta Falls is an award-winning landscaped course featuring eight waterfalls, a 65-foot Spanish ship and a view of the ocean from the mountaintop gazebo. Hours are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tickets are \$8.99 for adults and \$7.75 for children ages 3 to 12. **Info:** 904-461-5571. ■



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